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ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN SOUTH ASIA

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 12 December 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/67, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia". In that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to communicate with the States of the region and other concerned States in order to ascertain their views on the issue and to promote consultations among them with a view to exploring the best possibilities of furthering the efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia (para. 4), and also requested the Secretary-General to report on the subject to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (para. 5).

2. In response to his note verbale of 17 January 1996, the Secretary-General has to date received the reply which is reproduced in section II below. Should the Secretary-General receive further replies from Member States, they will appear in addenda to the present report.

II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE ASSOCIATED WITH IT (BULGARIA, CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, HUNGARY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA) AS WELL AS THE ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES CYPRUS AND MALTA

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[28 May 1996]

1. The European Union believes that nuclear-weapon-free zones can enhance both global and regional security. It therefore supports the project of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. However, for this to be achieved it is essential that such zones be based on arrangements freely arrived at by all the States in the region and that they do so in a way that recognizes general principles of international law and behaviour. We note that in paragraph 2 of resolution 50/67 the General Assembly urges the States of the region to continue to make all possible efforts to establish such a zone in South Asia and to refrain, in the meantime, from any action contrary to that objective.

2. Although the project of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia certainly constitutes an important regional contribution to nuclear non-proliferation, it cannot substitute for membership in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime. The European Union will therefore continue to appeal to countries that have not yet done so to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the States of the region would help give confidence that nuclear programmes in South Asia were exclusively for peaceful purposes.